of bio-diesel and diesel blend, and indicate the possibility of economic pricing of these products, then large scale oil seeds plantation would have to be undertaken before commercial production of bio-diesel begins.

The Government is aware that the European Union (EU), United States of America (USA), Canada and some other countries have undertaken bio-diesel programmes, with a variety of feed-stocks being used. However, the feed-stocks for production of bio-diesel in EU and USA are vegetable oils which are mainly edible oils. In USA, the bio-diesel programme is based on soyabean oil while in EU and most of Europe, sunflower oil and rapeseed oil are the major feed-stocks. Bio-diesel is being blended at 5 to 20% levels in USA, Canada and the EU, and is being used commercially. India is short of edible oil, hence non-edible oils like *Jatropha curcas and Pongomia* are proposed for bio-diesel production.

Air strips in Himachal Pradesh

†*113, SHRI SURESH BHARDWAJ: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of air strips in Himachal Pradesh and the number of those being used for regular flights;

(b) whether the State Government has demanded the help of the Central Government to expand and upgrade these air strips; and

(c) if so, the details of the assistance to be provided by the Central Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) There are three airstrips in Himachal Pradesh and all these airstrips are being used for regular flights.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. Under a Memorandum of Understanding signed between Airpors Authority of India (AAI) and the State Government of Himachal Pradesh, AAI is required to execute the identified development works at Kangra and Kullu airports as deposit work for the State Government. AAI has completed development works at Kangra. AAI has further taken up resurfacing of runway, construction of technical block-cum-control tower and fire station works at Kangra Airport from its own

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

resources. At Kullu Airport, apron and taxiway have been completed by AAI and other works such as Terminal building etc. are at various stages of execution. The State Government of H.P. has further demanded extension of runway at Kullu Airport for which additional land is required after retraining and reclaimation of land from river Bias. AAI has already commissioned a feasibility in this regard by IIT, Roorkee at the cost of approx. Rs. 9.75 lakhs.

Operational airports in the country

*114. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that inspite of spending Rs. 420 crore on maintenance and upgradation of airports in 2002-03 alone, only 63 out of 96 airports owned by the Airports Authority of India (AAI) are fully operational;

(b) whether it is also a fact that no efforts have been made by Government to operationalise 33 airports as it requires estimated investment of Rs. 1,200 crore; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor and the action proposed thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Expenditure on upgradation and maintenance of airports during 2002-03 were Rs. 445.66 crore and Rs. 138 crore respectively. However, 33 airports were non-operational during the year due to non-availability of flights on account of absence of traffic demand.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. Operationalisation of non-operational airports depends on prospect of regular flights operations at these airports. In the absence of any demand for flight operaions, it is not viable to operationalise these airports.

Modifications in River Linking Policy

*115. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Maharashtra, through a resolution adopted by Maharashtra Legislaive Assembly, has sought certain changes and modifications in the river linking policy of the Central Government;